

# THE ILLINOIS COUNCIL OF TROUT UNLIMITED

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House Resources Committee NEPA Taskforce  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Members of Congress:

Trout Unlimited's mission to conserve, protect and restore North America's cold water fisheries and their watersheds, strongly compels comment to the taskforce appointed by the House Resources Committee, currently considering whether any changes are warranted to be made to the National Environmental Policy Act. The Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited, in the past, has actively participated in NEPA proceedings, particularly in connection with the effect of the mercury, nitrous oxide, and sulfur dioxide emissions from our numerous Illinois coal burning power plants as well as supporting, we believe successfully, judicial review of US Forest Service planning under NEPA for three timber sales. In the future, we expect to be able to continue to avail ourselves of such rights which NEPA recognizes and provides to all citizens, albeit on sometimes rather contentious environmental issues.

To even contemplate a dilution of NEPA portends a doomed environment. NEPA provides the needed balance between the various and numerous factions competing in our environment. Trout Unlimited, by some, may be perceived as having the rather conical and limited vision of a fish in water, but we assure you the trout and its salmonid brethren are the barometers of a healthy environment. TU shares much common ground with other environmental organizations, for it is the entire watershed, not mere streambanks, upon which we focus and which defines our universe. Thus, we surely are not alone in extolling the obvious virtues of NEPA and the need to preserve at minimum this legislation which is the very heart of environmental protection.

Certainly NEPA, in its present state, admittedly falls well short of the ultimate environmentalist's paradigm, but it certainly provides a forum for at least clearing the air of contentiousness. Nevertheless, Trout Unlimited would strongly advocate that the taskforce and the House Resources Committee consider adding language to our national policy which would facilitate the need for preservation of the WILD.

The present Act tends to focus on balancing man's impact on the environment, thus thankfully limiting the prevailing nineteenth century view that nature would provide an unlimited harvest of natural resources -- a view traditionally cited for bringing the demise of the bison, carrier pigeon, and several species of trout. NEPA changed that, but now we must look forward, not to being satisfied with the current balancing act between man and nature, but to providing lasting protection to what is becoming the ever shrinking vestige of WILD. Our National Environmental Policy must be broadened to contain a carnivorous *dens* to shield the concept of WILD from man's unique ability to justify his insatiable appetite for natural resources. According, the Act must verbalize preservation of wild places and wilderness to the extent that they are inviolate and not subject to some achieved balance between population and resource. To not recognize the need for preservation of WILD in a National Environmental Policy would permit our citizenry to suffer the loss of an irreplaceable fundamental element of our national identity.

Respectfully,

Gregory Prosen  
Government Affairs Subcommittee